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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA PROPOSES SEMINAR TO BRING DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES INTO CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On February 15, Emboff met with Andrej Kranjc, Undersecretary for International Relations at the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment to discuss Slovenia's preparations for the 18-19 February climate change meeting in Brussels between CEQ and France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, the UK, and the European Commission in the framework of the Major Economies Meetings (MEM). (Note: Kranjc led the EU presidency/Slovenia delegation at the MEM meeting in Honolulu in late January and will attend the MEM climate change meeting in Brussels on behalf of the EU presidency. End note.) Kranjc discussed the European reaction to the Major Economies process that he observed in Honolulu and at the UNGA thematic debate on climate change in early February. Although Kranjc said that there is still a great deal of skepticism within the EU on the intentions of the United States with regard to the Major Economies process, he noted that all participants he spoke to at MEM in Honolulu found the meeting worthwhile. Kranjc said that he agreed with the United States on the need to bring developing countries into the climate change debate, but he added that developing nations should not be held to the same standard as developed countries. Kranjc said that Slovenia, in its role as president of the Council of the European Union, would like to host a seminar to bring developing countries and EU member states together to discuss climate change issues. End Summary.

Europeans Still on the Fence about the MEM Process

¶2. (SBU) Kranjc characterized the late-January MEM meeting in Honolulu as highly constructive but noted that many EU member states--and other third party countries--still hold serious reservations about the process. The primary concern, which Kranjc commented by this point should be of no surprise to the US, is that the MEM process would interfere with existing climate change processes, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Another concern held by the Europeans, according to Kranjc, is that the MEM process does not have a concrete end goal. Kranjc thought that there should be more discussion on what exactly can be achieved within the MEM framework. He believes that the Unites States has done a good job outlining the long-term goals for MEM, but he says the US must indentify mid-term targets and goals for the period leading up to 2020. Kranjc,

who just returned from the UNGA thematic discussion on climate change, said that there was little discussion of MEM there.

Slovenia Seeking to Bring Developing Countries into the Climate Change Debate

¶13. (SBU) Kranjc said that Slovenia agrees with the Untied States on the need to draw developing nations--particuarly India and China--into the climate change debate and added that Slovenia would like to promote this effort during its EU presidency. (Note: Slovenia has identified the discussion of climate change issues as a top priority for its EU presidency. End Note.) Kranjc said that Slovenia is laying the groundwork for a seminar that would bring developing countries and the EU together to discuss climate change issues. He envisions that the seminar would be held in Ljubljana and ideally take place before the UNFCCC meeting in Bangkok scheduled for March 31-April 4. He acknowledged, however, that it would more likely take place sometime in the month of April. Kranjc has been in contact with EU officials on the matter and reached out to several representatives from developing countries at the UNGA thematic debate to gauge their interest in the idea. He emphasized that the seminar would be for European Union member states and developing countries; as such, the United States would not be invited as a delegate. Kranjc acknowledged that the lack of invitation might discomfort the United States. He explained that even though the US would not be able to participate in the symposium, he looks forward to discussing the issue of third party involvement with US interlocuters at the MEM climate change meeting in Brussels on 19 February.

Kranjc Worried about Calls for Environmental Minister's Resignation

¶14. (SBU) Emboff brought up recent press reporting on the Slovenian Court of Audit's efforts to dismiss Environmental Minister Janez Podobnik. Kranjc gave an exasperated sigh and said that he could not comment on the matter, but that he hoped it would not distract the Environmental Ministry from its presidency obligations.

Comment

¶15. (SBU) Slovenia is in full agreement with us on the need to bring developing countries into the climate change debate, which presents an opportunity for us to work cooperatively with Slovenia toward promoting this objective during the latter's EU presidency. Despite the fact that Slovenia is a small country with limited resources, it can establish priorities in its role as EU president and set the time schedule for their discussion. Slovenia's efforts to raise awareness within the EU on the need to incorporate developing counties into the climate change debate might be a step in the right direction.

COLEMAN